TN Govt. Saves School Children From Smut Like Magic Tree House, Calvin & Hobbes, & A Light In The Attic

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from the *451-degrees* dept

Book bans are all the rage these days, as you likely well know. Far too many people, and folks in government more importantly, seem to have read Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* not as a lesson in the dangers of new media, but as some sort of instruction manual for how to treat literature. But the real story here is that a bunch of cowardly state and federal politicians are placating the desires largely of the religious right, who are seeking to tightly control the books that children have access to in public, secular schools. And if you can't manage to understand how plainly that is the antithesis of our form of government, then you're beyond help.

But because authoritarianism makes a fool of itself as a habit, and religiously-based authoritarianism all the moreso, then end result of these attempts at censorship always eventually reveal themselves as absurd. And if you need an example of that, you need only look at the state of Tennessee.

> *Magic Tree House author **Mary Pope Osborne**, children's poet **Shel Silverstein** and Calvin and Hobbes cartoonist **Bill Watterson** have joined **Judy Blume, Sarah J. Maas, Eric Carle** and **Kurt Vonnegut** on a mind-boggling list of hundreds of books purged from some Tennessee school libraries.*
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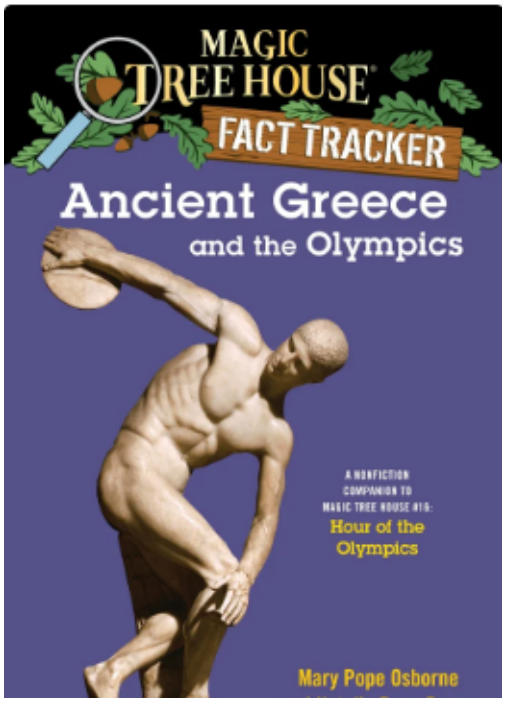
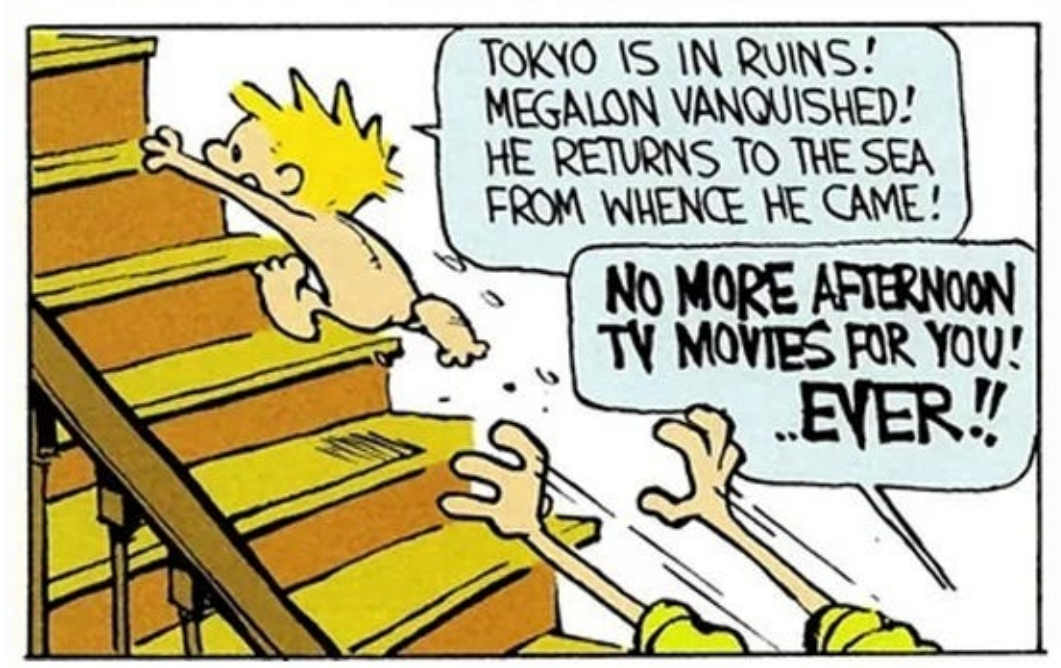
> *The removals are the result of a growing political movement to control information through book banning. In 2024, the state legislature amended the "Age-Appropriate Materials Act of 2022" to specify that any materials that "in whole or in part" contain any "nudity, or descriptions or depictions of sexual excitement, sexual conduct, excess violence, or sadomasochistic abuse" are inappropriate for all students and do not belong in a school library. This change means books are not evaluated as a whole, and excerpts can be considered without context, if they have any content that is deemed to cross these lines. This leaves no room for educators and librarians to curate collections that reflect the real world and serve the educational needs of today's students.*

And because you have groups of far-right activists marching around looking for any scintilla of material over which they can manufacture faux outrage, you get these examples of books being banned for their terrible, awful, smutty content. Such as a *Magic Tree House*, book that was banned because it had this pornographical image on its cover:


MAGIC TREE HOUSE
FACT TRACKER
Ancient Greece and the Olympics
A NONFICTION COMPANION TO MAGIC TREE HOUSE #16:
Hour of the Olympics
Mary Pope Osborne

Special thanks to Mike Masnick for briefly allowing me to post porn images on Techdirt. And for all of you whose naughty bits are currently twitching due to that book cover, I offer you my sincerest apologies.

But if you thought *that* was bad, check out this panel image from a *Calvin & Hobbes* book that got it banned. Here we have the nude image of a child on full display.



Now, I sure hope everyone realizes that the above is a dalliance into sarcasm, because I was laying it on quite thick. I grew up on *Calvin & Hobbes*, not to mention Shel Silverstein's *A Light in the Attic*, which was also banned. Why? More butts, that's why. And, because the universe is not without a sense of irony, one school even had to ban a book authored by an alumnus.

Oak Ridge Schools, where a significant number of the bans target art history books, even

> *removed Richard Jolley: Sculptor of Glass, a collection of works by the artist, who graduated from Oak Ridge High School.*
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> *"Regarding the book written by Mr. Jolley, we were thrilled to feature a book written by an ORHS alumni on our shelves and were equally disappointed to have to remove it," Molly Gallagher Smith, an Oak Ridge Schools spokeswoman, told WBIR. "Unfortunately, as an artist, Mr. Jolley's book features depictions of the human body that are in direct violation of the law."*

There are more and the bans hit all the notes you would expect: LGBTQ+ material, books about the Holocaust, books about African American contributions to government and science, and, because of course, *Fahrenheit 451* itself.

Now, this is indeed all absurd, but it isn't remotely funny. There is a ton of literature, hundreds of books, that are being banned under this Tennessee law. Many of them reportedly without going through any review process.

> *And many of the bans are coming without any review or discussion. The Tennessee Association of School Libraries found in a survey of its members that in 20% of school districts, books were removed from the shelves at the command of district leaders without any sort of review process. "Librarians and educators are concerned that we will end up pulling a massive amount of books without looking at the books as a whole," one member said in the survey. "It's a slippery slope," said another, "and I'm fearful of the next topic that will be regulated."*

Open up book bans to the frothy-mouthed mob. What could possibly go wrong, other than keeping valuable literature out of the hands of our children?

Filed Under: book banning, calvin and hobbes, censorship, magic tree house, tennessee
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